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From the Sidelines

So many things have happened lately that I have wanted to talk about that this and the following pages will be taken up with them. In doing this talking, I know that I will sometimes show my ignorance and may occasionally be talking like a citizen of Bowling Green rather than like a faculty member. I think that this sort of talk may be good for both of us.

1. Non-attendance of Juniors and Seniors at Classes. -- When I look back at my own undergraduate years and at my years of graduate study, I cannot recall when it would have profited me to stay out of any class that I was enrolled in. Maybe I just was not bright enough to miss when I felt that doing something else would be better for me and for whatever grades I needed or wanted. And, when I recall how in my own senior-college courses I had everything so planned that a day out for any student was likely to cut into his comprehension of the subject matter of the courses, I am still more puzzled about how I could have ever taught enough to convince any worthy student that my course should have been required. I cannot recall having ever had a student who could have stayed away from English 300, even for a day, without jeopardizing his standing, not because of my general cussedness but because of the daily work in the class that he would miss and could not possibly get from some note-taker flunky who actually attended classes. Of course, I realize that there are times, and they have always been generously allowed, when upperclassmen, because of pressing personal or college duties, just had to be absent from classes occasionally. I heartily agree that these should be allowed, of course, but I still doubt whether most of our juniors and seniors are sufficiently grown-up to be able to judge when they might take off and go fishing or sleep a few extra hours or maybe take a trip to Florida.

2. Voting of Students.--The very recent elections stressed, by accident, how little it means to most students to vote on all occasions. I was positively ashamed of the 14% showing of our students in the votes cast. I do not know what the remedy is; certainly the grown-ups outside our college sometimes do not do any better. I know lots of people who vote in local and state and national elections when they are in the mood but not otherwise. I wish that students could improve a little on the breed. If an outsider had come to the campus while the elections were in prospect, he could have thought that our students took a great interest in their own affairs: the bulletin boards were crammed with posters and announcements, small groups were to be seen everywhere electioneering or planning. But the votes cast represented just a fraction of the total enrollment. I have not asked anyone what was behind this apathy; most of the students whom I know personally voted, though some of them were in no sense enthusiastic about it.

3. Student Self-government.--Long ago I knew that a large portion of our students whom I knew or knew of were apathetic toward student self-government in any form proposed. The ones whom I have heard express opinions were largely unenthusiastic about the whole scheme, even those who regularly voted and had helped implement the whole scheme. Some of the older students, on an off the campus, almost yawned when the subject came up; some have said that it seemed like high-school stuff to them. Mature commuting students seemed least interested of all. I have found no actual hostility or prejudice against the idea, only a sort of "So what?" attitude.

4. Fraternities and Sororities.--My experience with one fraternity has been in every way delightful, since the Alpha Gamma Rho boys next door are almost a part of the lives of Mom and me. Though most of the boys are immature and boyish, I find them courteous, industrious, and nearly always planning their future careers here and in technical schools. There has been excellent leadership all along. Many of

the finest boys that I have known at Western in my whole career have lived in the house and are recognized for their leadership and scholarship here and where they have gone after graduation, even in the two years the house as such has been in existence. Hosts of people, in Western and in the city, have quizzed me often about the boys and the whole idea of fraternities. I have always answered by speaking of this one fraternity house, about which I know a lot. As to others, I have very vague ideas, for I have had no opportunity to know. The Lambda Chi Alpha House, down the street a few houses, is almost wholly unknown to me; the boys occasionally borrow a ladder or a saw from me when they are cleaning up, but they are courteous, seem eager to get acquainted, and speak to me whenever I meet them on or off the campus. Because so many people make wild statements about the whole system, I try to keep the record straight and say that I am talking only about what I know. Mrs. Anna Jones, the A. G. R. housemother, is a lovely lady and has become a good friend of Mom and me. She seems genuinely interested in the boys and is not afraid to offer advice about appearances and conduct. So far as I know, no aggravated case of discipline has arisen over there, though small cases, of course, are inevitable with a group of 36 live, green, immature lads. As long as they have good leadership, I am sure that Mom and I will be happy; if the place deteriorates, I will be the first fellow to communicate with Billy Adams, their sponsor, for that is our agreement, made before the first boy moved in. I feel a deep sense of obligation to Adams and to the leaders, who have in every way been fine sports with us all. I told one of the leading boys over there that having good leadership will be the one way to keep the good opinion of the neighbors and the college. The very crude way in which their neighbor on the other side of their house has acted would have made many boys that I have known here and elsewhere really put on some irritating acts to get even; so far as I know, no such little actions have cropped up thus far.

5. Image of Western.--Some irresponsible students have somewhat blurred the image of Western among lots of the town and county people. Definitely some of the depredations have been student-led; others have been blamed on students. The feeling in some of the country places where I study birds is positively hostile to Western right now; damage of property just does not strike these people as something forgivable. Breaking into houses, holding wild parties at all hours of the night, littering lots of places on Drake's, Trammel, and other creeks with beer cans and trash are exceedingly obvious to any of us who like to drive by such spots on our country roads. I am sure that many acts are attributed to students when it is not their work, but I am afraid that much of it is. For further details, ask Dr. George McCelvey about the ravages on his property on the ridge beyond Glen Lilly; ask Dr. L. Y. Lancaster about the break-in at the Mouth of Gasper in March.

6. Faculty Conduct.--It may be that I am too sensitive about the actions of the faculty. There are several fellows on our teaching staff that are addicted to stirring up promiscuous hell, even in public eating places. I am sure that you know about some of these and hope that proper notice has been taken, especially when tenure time comes. Miss Justine Lynn's saying that what she did away from her classroom was nobody's business may be up-to-date and quite the thing, but the parents of some of our students would think otherwise, even if the students in question were in no sense models of conduct. "If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch."

7. Religious Atmosphere.--A few days ago one of our prominent full-professors and I were discussing the effort of church schools to belittle Western and other state-supported institutions. He had recently been a member of a committee of his church to discuss the religious atmosphere of the church schools. What he said must have made some of his brethren (of a very large congregation) blink fearfully. He, a product of a private school and a faithful adherent to

the church of his choice, told the committee that it had been his observation that there was more genuine religious attitude on our campus and among our teachers and students than in any other school he had ever been. He commended the lack of denominational prejudice on the part of the vast majority of our faculty members, the interest that so many of them take in some local church, the number of officials from our churches who are our regular faculty members, and on and on. I do not know whether he succeeded in making his point, but he at least let off some steam. Many students who came here from junior colleges run by churches have told me that too many times the religious atmosphere of the church schools was for public consumption and was largely hypocrisy, in his observation.

8. Integration at Western.--When I read the mouthings of such public characters as George Wallace and the equally loud "Black Power" leaders, I am greatly pleased that Western has managed to attack this very difficult problem with common sense and practical Christianity. I am just as afraid of the Extreme Right as I am of the Extreme Left; either is not guided by a sense of justice or right but by prejudice. If there is any organized group of Extreme Rightists on our campus, I am unconscious of it; and, so far as I know, there is not and has not been any Extreme Leftist movement in the open.

9. The Tail and the Dog.--It is always difficult to keep from noticing the tail of the dog when it is wagging or has assumed a threatening stance. The actual number of our students who are vocal in advocating so-called new things is very small but quite loud, usually. Reading the "Letters to the Editor" type of communications in the College Heights Herald might make some outsider think that we are a school where everything that has ever been is wrong. I have known loud exponents so long that I rarely get more than a chuckle out of these wild-eyed suggestions about what is wrong with Western. Maybe getting some of this off their chests makes the writers less dangerous.

It will be a sad day for Western when these belly-achers get more attention than they deserve. May the Good Lord protect us against any immediate outbreak of SKEWERS! The more I think of that incident, the more I wonder how some of our teachers could go clear through to their Ph. D. degrees without learning even a little common sense. I may have said it too often, but here it goes again: most student outbreaks and rebellions are led or at least encouraged by faculty members. A faculty member does not have to come out and say that the whole scheme is wrong by which he draws a respectable salary, twice as much as he was getting only a few years ago; all he needs to do is to suggest that there are snakes in Eden, over his coffee at the Faculty House or at a public function of some sort. I do not want to choke off criticism of our university; we need all the sympathetic criticism that we can get; but wild-eyed, immature-boy talk does only harm to other immature boys. Whether students or faculty, let's not let the tail wag the dog merely because it is wagging while the rest of the dog remains staunchly where he belongs.

10.--Recognition.--I am greatly pleased when we recognize the achievements of various types of our students. We have often been accused of being one-sided in this recognition, and there is too much truth in this criticism to ignore it. Gradually, if we intend to be a university, we must give more public and printed credit to scholarship, leadership in various fields, permanent contributions to the image and the value of Western. The Big Boys we want to impress in educational and educated circles are looking for records of what we have done and can do, for solving problems of education, for producing permanent contributions to scholarship, for training of leaders in every sort of work. Though our main interest will probably for a long time remain our training of teachers, we must make public note of other types of leaders we have trained. This is old stuff to you, as I know, but I am speaking, as I said earlier, as a sideline, a citizen, rather than as a member of the faculty.

11. Provincialism.--How to keep the friendly, open-door policy of the older, smaller school and also grow up into the full stature of a university in reality and not merely in name is one of our biggest problems now. Our "long-cabin" origin, if we want to call it that, was fine; our struggle to make our way in a strange world was also great; now we are in a position to be a Big Brother in education rather than a mere part of a system. We need not apologize for our achievements; we need only make a lot more, worthy of our better times, our better finances, our more widely-trained faculty, our tremendous enrollment. I would hate to know an oak that refused to admit that it sprang from an acorn; I would like my big oak better, however, if it accepted that simple fact and began from there. Edmund Burke said that Protestantism (and he was a Protestant) had suffered more from being a protest than it often gained from its positive stand on religious issues. Life is too serious a thing to be devoted merely to protesting, however value protesting sometimes may have. It is still necessary, I know, to "sell" public education to some people; but the overwhelming number of people who patronize the state-supported schools, primary, secondary, and collegiate, should convince us that we can devote most of ^{our} energy to positive things rather than dwelling too much on the faults of the system we have outgrown. Recently, in looking over the list of students now registered at Western I was struck by the huge number of boys and girls whose parents or grandparents would have refused to go to college if that college had been a state school. I have been amazed by the final rise of the New England state universities to the stature of the Middle Western, Southern, and Western universities. Some of the schools were mere weaklings until a dozen years ago. Now they can hold up their heads with the heavily-endowed private name schools. Storrs, Connecticut, used to be an unknown little dinky town where a small, little-known state school was located; today it is

large and many-sided, with offerings and a faculty that Middle Western universities would not be ashamed of. Our William Lee stayed on there and saw it grow from nearly nothing to Something.

12. Age 65.--That the new policy of stepping down from the headship of a department at 65 is now promulgated, as I have been told by faculty members who strongly approve it, I am glad that my own wish in this matter has been realized. This, with salaries, faculty ratings, more adequate library facilities, more classroom buildings and equipment, will help us to be regarded as a real university. As I said several times in previous installments of this interminable diary, I would gladly have stepped down at 65, if that had been the rule; though I did not see any especial sense in naming a martyr of myself unless it was the policy. I think it is the province of a real departmental head to train a possible successor, not that he may place him officially but that there will always be someone to take charge in case of emergency or sudden death. Tragic consequences have often resulted because a departmental ^{head} seemed unconcerned about there ever being a trained successor. The trouble about some people is that their belief in immortality is that they are immortal--here and on and on. Quite boorishly, I have several times spoken of two departments on the campus, in times past, as menageries, made up of some rare creatures but with no ring-master or animal-trainer. It is good that this sort of thing is gradually becoming a thing of the past. It is a truth that many people refuse to accept, but all of us are expendable! Our big opinions of ourselves some day will receive some rude shocks when we find how the world still turns on its axis after we have relinquished the wheel that we thought turned the whole universe. It seems to me that a fellow would like to feel that he helped secure the safety of the world's turning by having a trained hand to help turn when the machinery got stuck.

13. University High.--A great many people seem disturbed about the closing of the upper four grades of the Training School. When I have been approached about this matter, I have said that I knew nothing about the plans other than the ones appearing in the papers. Since I have not studied the matter, I actually know nothing about the new set-up and, therefore, had better say so. As you know, a good many people in Bowling Green would like, if it did not cost too much or just did not cost at all, to have a very private high school for their own families, forgetting that there are any other people. That may account for some of the stir about the proposed new arrangement. Of course, most people, of whatever education, know nothing about the problems of student teaching and have probably never heard about how many of our students are doing this work outside the Training School.

14. McNeill School.--Recently, by the request of the teachers in charge, I spent a half day with the two rooms of the fourth grade at McNeill School and had one of the finest experiences of my life. Mrs. Bellwood, one of the student teachers in that grade, has been working on a project involving the early history of Bowling Green. I was asked to tell about some famous person of Bowling Green. I chose Mrs. William A. Obenchain, whose AUNT JANE OF KENTUCKY certainly is crammed with impressions of Bowling Green of early times and down to my own early days here. I mentioned her telling about the old Presbyterian Church, down in the corner of the cemetery on College Street; the old drinking trough for horses at the side of the little park down town, the quaint marketing of animals by driving them down our streets from out in the country, the historic "house that was a wedding fee," just beyond the airport, and a good many other things. In the question-and-answer period I was asked some very fine questions by the children, like "Why did Bowling Green grow up just here and not somewhere else?" "When did steamboats start coming up Barren River?" "When did the railroad come?" The children were attentive and courteous, the teachers and

student teachers were so much interested that I stayed on for a very long time while the pupils had a recess; in fact, a great many of the youngsters decided not to go out to play but to stay in and ask more questions and to get the autograph of the speaker. I never wrote my name so many times in the same length of time.

A few days later a visiting Brazilian educator, Mr. Leontisinis, or some such spelling, visited McNeill School and, later, was entertained at Mammoth Cave by the David Roarks of Simpson County. I was asked to go along to help. The visiting señor seemed greatly impressed by his visit to McNeill; he told Willson Wood on his return from the school and the cave trip that in his two months of studying schools all over America he had not been so impressed anywhere as by our own school. He is minister of education for the state of Rio de Janeiro and is going to establish 300 new schools in that state, combining some of the new ways he has been observing in the United States.

15. The Science Complex.--It would be a blind man who could not see the importance of the new science complex now so far along the way to completion and usefulness. In addition to my own daily view of it I am often with my son and with Dean Russell and thus get other views that I could not get alone. Everybody seems enthusiastic about the prospect of more and better classroom space and facilities. The extra hours necessary to keep things going have almost destroyed any long talks with Gordon, Jr., and Russell, for they have their hands full. I will enjoy watching the moving into more ample quarters and the pride that will come when most of the sciences are housed on the Ogden campus.

16. Tenure.--It is a great step forward to Western to have a firm plan of tenure. Certainly that gives both the teacher and the university a chance to know^{whether} Teacher A belongs in his place and Teacher B would be better off somewhere else. Of course, some mistakes will be made, but this certainly helps weed out the misfits. In general I am

highly pleased with the ones whom I know who are staying. And I am also pleased with the departure of several, for this reason or some other. In the English department alone there have been some actually good fellows who wanted to go elsewhere and went; some, not so good, seemed to read the proper handwriting on the wall and withdrew in good time; a very few got out, and that is about the shortest and best way to express it. Tenure, coupled with faculty rating, gives us a big-school look and tone. Too often, probably, I have set down my own irritations because just anybody was regarded by our service area as ^{being as} prominent as any one else. I have always been democratic enough to want to know and live with people of all kinds; I still believe, however, that there should be some public recognition of one's training and experience merely beyond his being a fine fellow. Not all of any army can be captains, even, not to mention generals; it would soon be a disastrous army if only commissioned officers were around; it would also be pretty bad if there was no one above the rank of buck private. Even democracy must recognize ranks and must try to make them have some meaning other than what popular favor assigns them.

17. Retired Teachers.--When Western was small, and everybody was needed to draw water and hew wood, I strongly opposed any significant number of outsiders being brought in after they had retired elsewhere. In my department they could have done far more to disrupt the even tenor of our way than anything else: outsiders would have been placed in charge of classes that had been laboriously built up by our teachers, who had labored unnoticed for years to make a course distinctive. For example, think about the implied slur to Miss Frances Richards if some person, no matter how famous in his own right and in the college where he had labored, had been brought in to teach Kentucky Literature. This is a strained case, I know, for not many people I know would presume to teach such a course, but it illustrates what could have been unpleasant. At any time in my tenure as head of the English department, we needed more than anything else some more teachers of freshmen and sophomores. We had well-

trained and experienced teachers for the major fields of English. And there was not enough money to hire adornments as such.

Now, with many more people around, it is not so bad to have a few retired people, one or two in the largest departments, for example. The very few who have come into the English department have fit in well and in no sense are trying to steal any thunder; I do not know about other departments. One retired teacher to forty-seven regular faculty members and more than a dozen part-time or graduate assistants can be easily absorbed; with seven to ten teachers, each one loaded with junior-college classes, it would have almost provoked a riot to take a senior-college course from a regular and assign in its place another class in freshman English or introduction to literature. On highly-technical levels, I realize, it will often be good policy to take on, for brief times only, some outstanding scholar from the outside. But, as a student, I shunned every such person in my own long schooling: I did not go to Indiana to take courses under some private-college teacher who was employed for a summer or a semester only; I wanted my own Indiana men who had made Indiana University distinctive, and I got them, without any undue scheming. I probably missed some good things, but all of us have to choose a way in such a big thing as a university, and it is impossible to get everything. Frankly, this feeling that I early acquired right here, where I had some pick-up teachers and had to work with some others who looked down on the tacky little college where they were earning some extra bread and butter, was one of the reasons why I did not want to go elsewhere after I retired here. I felt, and rightly so, that I would be regarded as a sort of allowable freak and not anything permanent. I know that I would have been entertained royally by former students of Western and would have had a chance to retell my favorite yarns to new audiences of students, but it would have been somewhere else except the place with which I had been so long associated. This is one man's view and may in no sense be common among retired teachers and colleges that employ them. After all, the

reputation of any institution is built on those who make themselves a part of it and rise or fall with it and are not mere sojourners in the land.

18. Duplication of Efforts.--As I have said so many times, I deeply appreciate your assigning people certain things to do and then expecting them to do just those and not trespass on somebody else's territory. Academic people should be assigned to academic jobs; service people will do better when they stick to their own tasks and do not try to tell the trained faculty how to teach their classes. Some of the most unpleasant memories of my lifetime at Western are of being blocked by some underling who was not a teacher but who presumed that he could tell my major students what to take and what not to take, whom to have as a teacher and whom to shun, how to avoid following plainly-worded directions in our catalogue and then fawning on somebody to get forgiveness. I am sure that I made more enemies of a sort by insisting on attending to my own business than by anything else I have done in my long life of impulsiveness. If I did not know what to do, I should have been set aside and replaced; if I did know, then I should have been allowed to do it and held accountable for doing it. Too many college cooks can and do spoil a lot of broth. If I am in a position where Professor A is my superior officer, then I should render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's or try my fortunes elsewhere.